

# Francisco Antonio Manzanares

## 1843–1904

TERRITORIAL DELEGATE 1884–1885  
DEMOCRAT FROM NEW MEXICO

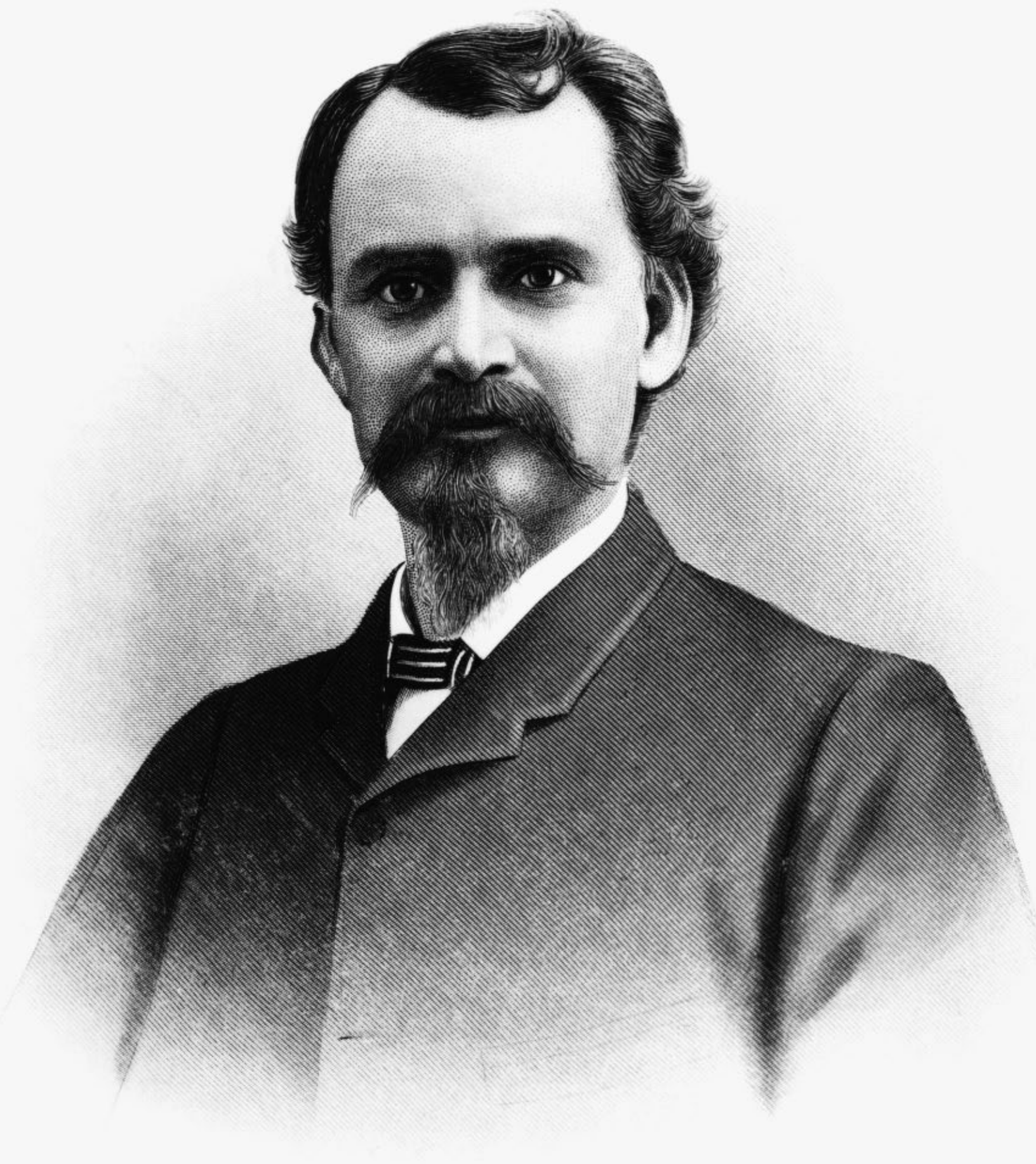
An accomplished entrepreneur, Francisco Manzanares was a reluctant candidate for New Mexico Territorial Delegate in the U.S. House. Urged on by friends and political supporters, Manzanares—who had never clearly allied himself with either major political party—accepted the Democratic nomination, noting that his preference was to remain immersed in the booming business opportunities in the district and admitting he was a political neophyte. “My life has been spent in active business pursuits and I do not pretend to be versed in the methods of distinctions of the politician,” he said.<sup>1</sup> As it turned out, Manzanares endured not only the rigors of the territorial campaign, but also a contested election that consumed half a congressional term. Serving just a year, Manzanares returned contentedly to his business interests at the close of the 48th Congress (1883–1885).

Francisco Antonio Manzanares was born in Abiquiú, New Mexico, on January 25, 1843, to José Antonio Manzanares and Maria Manuela Valdez. José Manzanares represented his family’s home county, Rio Arriba, in the New Mexico Territory’s First Legislative Assembly (1851–1852) and in the territorial council of the Third, Fourth, and Sixth Legislative Assemblies (1853–1855; 1856–1857).<sup>2</sup> Manzanares attended the Taos school of Padre Antonio José Martínez, a prominent local priest who had mentored José Manuel Gallegos, New Mexico’s first *nuevomexicano* Delegate to the U.S. House. Manzanares attended St. Louis University from 1863 to 1864. After leaving the university, Manzanares worked one year at Chick, Browne, and Company, a merchandising firm in Kansas City, Missouri. He then moved to New York City to study in a commercial college and worked in a bank. When he returned to Chick, Browne, and Company, Manzanares took advantage of the burgeoning railroad

industry by expanding the firm’s business to cities that served the Kansas Pacific and the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroads. Propelled by his ambition and work ethic, he rose from company clerk to partner in four years by buying interest from a senior partner. Renamed Browne & Manzanares, the firm moved to Las Vegas, New Mexico, and competed with commissioning firms such as Otero, Sellar, and Co. and the Romero firm. Eventually, Browne & Manzanares established branches in five cities in New Mexico and Colorado.<sup>3</sup> In 1871 Manzanares married Ofelia Baca, the daughter of Benito Baca, a cousin and Democratic opponent of Mariano S. Otero’s in the 1878 race for Delegate. The couple had two children, Antonio, Jr., and Manuel.<sup>4</sup>

Manzanares’s fortunes increased as the scope of his business activities widened. The newly renamed Browne & Manzanares Company became so successful that it opened a wholesaling firm in Las Vegas, New Mexico, where Manzanares lived. By 1885 the firm had become a stock company, with branches in three locations in New Mexico and Colorado. Manzanares contributed to the territory’s economic development through his involvement in forming the First National Bank of Las Vegas, the First National Bank of Santa Fe, and the First National Bank of Raton. Manzanares also formed a wholesale grocery business with branches throughout the territory. He enjoyed close ties with the Republican-dominated Santa Fe Ring, serving as a trustee of the Maxwell Land Grant Company and, with other Ring members, as a co-director of the First National Bank of Santa Fe.<sup>5</sup>

In 1882 Manzanares received the Democratic nomination to challenge the incumbent Territorial Delegate, Tranquilino Luna, for a seat in the 48th Congress. One observer noted, “Nobody was more surprised to know the action of the Democratic convention than Manzanares



himself.” The same observer noted that when Manzanares received word of his nomination, he hesitated and at “first wanted to know all the circumstances that led up to this ... and wondered whether he may refuse to be a candidate before leaving the city on much more important business than politics.”<sup>6</sup> From the outset, Manzanares was uncertain about leaving behind his growing business empire for the rigors of campaigning. In his acceptance letter, Manzanares frankly acknowledged his lack of political experience, writing that although he appreciated “the high honor conferred upon me by selecting me from the masses of many fellow citizens as one fitted to represent the interests of our territory ... I have been reluctant to accept the nomination, but the urgent solicitation of many of my fellow citizens and personal friends of every shade of political opinion and from every portion of the Territory ... constrains me to forgo my personal preferences.”<sup>7</sup>

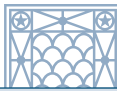
Assessing the Luna-Manzanares contest, Republican political operative William A. Breeden suggested that part of Manzanares’s reluctance to accept the Democratic nomination may have been his conflicting political loyalties. “It is a known fact that Sr. Manzanares stated ... that he did not know whether he was a Republican or a Democrat and that he would have to investigate and examine the records and the principles of the two parties before being [able] to determine to which party he belonged,” Breeden said. He described Manzanares as “a man who flirts with both political parties, who seeks and asks for the smiles and favors of each party and refuses to declare his allegiance to either.” While urging Republicans to rally behind Luna, he warned Democrats that “with all of [Manzanares’s] changing around and his avoidances and his attempts to avoid the question, although he tried to be a candidate through the Democratic Party, [Manzanares] also wants to avoid being the candidate of the party.”<sup>8</sup>

Press coverage of the race juxtaposed Manzanares’s lack of political experience with his effort to win one of the most coveted seats in territorial politics. Predictably, Luna’s supporters emphasized his experience navigating Washington’s political scene, portraying Manzanares as an inexperienced businessman who would be beyond his

capabilities representing territorial interests in the national capital.<sup>9</sup> Luna, who had tried to push New Mexico toward statehood and to settle some of the territory’s outstanding land claims, was himself breaking with convention by running for a second term, because a string of previous Delegates had served one term.<sup>10</sup> Luna won the election, with 53 percent to Manzanares’s 47 percent.<sup>11</sup>

Although Luna was declared the winner, and the territory certified the results, Manzanares contested the election because of alleged voting irregularities in a number of precincts, particularly in Luna’s political base of Valencia County.<sup>12</sup> One Republican-leaning newspaper stated, “We believe that Mr. Manzanares was fairly elected by the voters of New Mexico, and we have never hesitated to say that we believed he was entitled to his seat, and there is not an honest man in the Territory or either political party who will deny the justice or fairness of this action by the House.”<sup>13</sup> The House Committee on Elections, controlled by the newly installed Democratic majority, reviewed the evidence and disqualified nearly 2,400 votes that were determined to be fraudulent. Inconsistencies in the poll books suggested that at least portions of these votes had been forged. After deducting these votes, the committee determined that Manzanares had prevailed by nearly 940 votes.<sup>14</sup> Midway through the congressional term, the House Committee on Elections overturned the election results and awarded Manzanares the seat.<sup>15</sup>

Sworn into the House on March 5, 1884, Manzanares served on the Committee on Coinage, Weights, and Measures (the only committee New Mexico Territorial Delegates had served on until that point).<sup>16</sup> He submitted bills for pension relief for individual constituents and bills for infrastructure improvements, to provide funds for a hospital, to construct a school for American Indians, and to reserve land for a university.<sup>17</sup> He added an amendment to the 1886 Indian Appropriations Bill (H.R. 7970) that secured \$25,000 to establish an industrial school for Indian students in Santa Fe.<sup>18</sup> At the end of his term, a newspaper called Manzanares “the best delegate in Congress ever sent by Democratic votes in this Territory.” The editors of the newspaper continued,



“The people, irrespective of party, acknowledge the fact that he has faithfully discharged the duties of a delegate and has fully lived up to the trust reposed in him. Mr. Manzanares retires to private life with the esteem and confidence of the people of New Mexico, and may count on many a Republican vote should he ever again desire official honors.”<sup>19</sup>

Manzanares declined to serve for a second term and returned to managing his business empire in New Mexico and Colorado. One newspaper noted that Manzanares “accomplished what he desired in the passage of various important bills which he had prepared for the aid of the Territory, and in demolishing the political ring in the Territory”—the latter part of the statement referring to his success as a candidate who was not endorsed by the Santa Fe Ring. He remained active in New Mexico politics and continued to be an important figure in Democratic Party circles.<sup>20</sup> In 1886 and 1897, Manzanares served as a county commissioner. He also participated in the 1889 New Mexico constitutional convention.<sup>21</sup>

In 1902 Manzanares sold his interest in Browne & Manzanares for a 5,000- to 6,000-acre plot of land in San Miguel County and a cash settlement.<sup>22</sup> After a long bout with a stomach disease, he died in Las Vegas, New Mexico, on September 17, 1904, “surrounded by the clamor and tears of ... dear children and beloved sisters, who had been called ahead of time to his death bed.”<sup>23</sup> Manzanares was interred in Mount Calvary Cemetery in Las Vegas.

## FOR FURTHER READING

*Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, “Francisco Antonio Manzanares,” <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.

Haines, Helen. *History of New Mexico from the Spanish Conquest to the Present Time, 1530–1890: With Portraits and Biographical Sketches of Its Prominent People* (New York: New Mexico Historical Publishing Co., 1891): 515–519.

Meier, Matt S. *Mexican American Biographies: A Historical Dictionary, 1836–1987* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988): 130.

## MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

**Library of Congress** (Washington, D.C.). *Papers*: Benjamin Harrison Papers, 1787–1940. Contains two letters sent by Manzanares to the Benjamin Harrison administration.

## NOTES

- 1 “At Last,” 11 October 1882 (Santa Fe) *Daily New Mexican*: 1.
- 2 W. G. Ritch, *The Legislative Blue Book of the Territory of New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968; reprint of 1882 edition): 101–104; Carlos Brazil Ramirez, “The Hispanic Political Elite in Territorial New Mexico: A Study of Classical Colonialism,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California–Santa Barbara, 1979): 302. Manzanares’s father also served as prefect of Rio Arriba County under the military administration of the United States in 1849. José Manzanares later fought for the Union in the Civil War and served as a United States Indian Agent.
- 3 Helen Haines, *History of New Mexico from the Spanish Conquest to the Present Time, 1530–1890* (New York: New Mexico Historical Publishing, Co., 1891): 51; “Francisco A. Manzanares,” in Maurilio E. Vigil, *Los Patrones: Profiles of Hispanic Political Leaders in New Mexico* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1980): 80; Ramirez, “The Hispanic Political Elite in Territorial New Mexico”: 302. The branches were in El Moro, Carson City, Granada, and La Junta, Colorado; and Socorro, New Mexico.
- 4 Ramirez, “The Hispanic Political Elite in Territorial New Mexico: A Study of Classical Colonialism”: 298. For biographical information about Benito Baca, see Benjamin M. Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico* (New York: Arno Press, 1976; reprint of 1912 edition): 732.
- 5 Ramirez, “The Hispanic Political Elite in Territorial New Mexico: A Study of Classical Colonialism”: 303; Haines, *History of New Mexico from the Spanish Conquest to the Present Time, 1530–1890*: 519; “Francisco A. Manzanares” in Vigil, *Los Patrones*: 81. According to Haines, Browne & Manzanares Company became “one of the largest houses in the Southwest, having branches in Las Vegas, Socorro, and Trinidad, Col.” According to Vigil, Manzanares’s grocery stores were located in “Granada, La Junta, and Trinidad in Colorado, and Otero and Springer in New Mexico.”
- 6 “Cuando se hace la pregunta directa sobre si aceptaría la nominación [*sic*] de la democracia. El señor Manzanares titubio [*sic*] un momento y dijo que no sabía todavía. Quería primero ponerse al tanto de todas las circunstancias que la trajeron a cabo—y a ver que había negado a ser un candidato antes de salir de la ciudad, con un negocio de mucha mayor importancia para el que la política, y ninguno estaba más sorprendido de saber el proceder de la convención democrática que el mismo Manzanares. La decisión se ha hecho,” 12 October 1882, (Santa Fe) *Daily New Mexican*: 3. Translated as “The Decision Has Been Made,” by Translations International, Inc. (January 2010).



- 7 "At Last," 11 October 1882, (Santa Fe) *Daily New Mexican*: 2.
- 8 "Ciertamente no debían ni pueden afectar la situación, ni cambiar la mayoría republicana del territorio ... Manzanares ha declarado muy recientemente que no sabía si era republicano o demócrata y que tendría que investigar y examinar los registros y principios de los dos partidos antes que pudiese determinar a cual pertenecía." William A. Breeden, "La aceptación analizada," 19 October 1882, (Santa Fe) *Daily New Mexican*, 3. Translated as "Acceptance Analyzed," by Translations International, Inc. (January 2010).
- 9 "Manzanares and Luna," 18 October 1882, (Santa Fe) *Daily New Mexican*: 2.
- 10 "Hon. Tranquilino Luna," 4 August 1882, *Las Vegas Daily Gazette*: 4.
- 11 "General Election 1882—Votes as returned, counted, and declared for Delegate to 48th Congress," National Archives Microfilm Publication M364, Roll 1, Interior Department Territorial Papers of the United States, New Mexico, 1851–1914, RG 48, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (NACP). The results (15,062 votes for Luna and 13,378 for Manzanares) were certified on 29 November 1882.
- 12 For newspaper coverage of the contested election, see "Manzanares vs. Luna," 6 March 1884, (Santa Fe) *Daily New Mexican*: 2; Martha Durant Read "Colonel José Francisco Chaves: A Short Biography of the Father of the New Mexico Statehood Movement," *Southwest Heritage* 8, no. 4 (Winter 1978–1979): 18. José Francisco Chaves, a former Delegate and Luna's political ally, was dogged throughout his career by charges that he ran a political machine out of Valencia County. He was also charged with colluding with the Santa Fe Ring, although he actively worked against it on a number of occasions.
- 13 Haines, *History of New Mexico from the Spanish Conquest to the Present Time, 1530–1890*: 516.
- 14 Chester Rowell, *A Historical and Legal Digest of All the Contested Election Cases in the House of Representatives of the United States from the First to the Fifty-Sixth Congress, 1789–1901* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976; reprint of 1901 edition): 399–400.
- 15 Rowell, *A Historical and Legal Digest of Contested Election Cases*: 399–400; "New Mexico's Loss," 22 November 1892, *New York Times*: 2. According to this obituary, "the Democratic House of Representatives gave the seat to Manzanares."
- 16 *Congressional Record*, Index, 48th Cong., 1st sess.: 282; *Congressional Record*, Index, 48th Cong., 2nd sess.: 110.
- 17 *Congressional Record*, House, 48th Cong., 1st sess. (5–6 March 1884): 1621, 1655; *Congressional Record*, Index, 48th Cong., 1st sess.: 282.
- 18 *Congressional Record*, House, 48th Cong., 2nd sess. (22 January 1885): 922, 930; *Congressional Record*, House, 48th Cong., 2nd sess. (3 March 1885): 2533, 2544; Senate Committee on Appropriations, 48th Cong., 2nd sess., 1885, S. Rep. 1283: 1, 4.
- 19 Haines, *History of New Mexico from the Spanish Conquest to the Present Time, 1530–1890*: 516.
- 20 Ramirez, "The Hispanic Political Elite in Territorial New Mexico: A Study of Classical Colonialism": 302–304; Howard R. Lamar, *The Far Southwest: A Territorial History, 1846–1912*, rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000): 142–143; Territory of New Mexico, *Report of the Secretary of the Territory, 1903–1904, and Legislative Manual, 1905* (Santa Fe: The New Mexican Printing Company, 1905): 48–opposite; "Francisco A. Manzanares," in Vigil, *Los Patronos*: 82. Lamar argues that one long-term effect of the factional squabbling among Republicans was the loss of the Delegate's seat for more than 10 years. By the summer of 1884, the Republicans had divided into two main factions, the Santa Fe Ring and a group of Valencia County Republicans led by José Francisco Chaves who "jointly denounced Secretary Ritch, Governor Sheldon, and the whole Santa Fe Ring" at their county convention. At the Republican territorial convention, Chave[s] and delegates from the southern and western counties left the convention in protest." In the wake of the standoff, "new faces and new forces ... persuaded the Democrats to pass over the conservative Manzanares to choose Antonio Joseph" as their candidate. As the nation tended to vote Democratic in the 1884 elections, so did New Mexico, and Joseph defeated Republicans L. Bradford Prince and William Rynerson, the latter a member of the territorial council. Joseph won 45 percent of the vote; Prince, 36 percent; and Rynerson, 19 percent. Vigil does not state which county Manzanares served as commissioner, but most likely it was San Miguel or Valencia.
- 21 Robert W. Larson, *New Mexico's Quest for Statehood, 1846–1912* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968): 156.
- 22 Ramirez, "The Hispanic Political Elite in Territorial New Mexico": 303.
- 23 "En medio de los clamores y lágrimas de sus queridos hijos y amadas hermanas, quien [*sic*] habían sido llamadas con anticipación á su lecho de muerte ... sufría, hacía ya algunos años, de complicaciones en su organism interno ... una inflamacion de los intestinos y estómago que al fin paralizó la acción de estos órganos importantes." "Don Francisco A. Manzanares," 17 September 1904, *La voz del pueblo* (Las Vegas, NM): 4. Translated as "Francisco A. Manzanares" by Translations International, Inc. (January 2010).



“IF MY FELLOW CITIZENS SEE  
FIT TO ELECT ME AS THEIR  
DELEGATE IT WILL BE MY  
ENDEAVOR TO ... SERVE THE  
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OF MY ABILITY AND WITH  
WHATEVER KNOWLEDGE OF  
ITS WANTS AND INTERESTS  
I MAY POSSESS.”

Francisco Antonio Manzanares  
(Santa Fe) *Daily New Mexican*,  
October 11, 1882